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-THE CIVIL WAR CAMPAIGNS OF 1864-
OPERATIONAL AND TACTICAL DEFEAT LEADING TO STRATEGIC VICTORY

by

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Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

5 February 1988

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
1a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION Unclassified			1b. RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS		
2a. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY			3. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF REPORT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.		
2b. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE			5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)		
4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)			7a. NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION		
6a. NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION School of Advanced Military Studies; USAC&GSC		6b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable) ATZL-SWV	7b. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)		
6c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027-6900			9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER		
8a. NAME OF FUNDING / SPONSORING ORGANIZATION		8b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)	10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS		
8c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)		PROGRAM ELEMENT NO.	PROJECT NO.	TASK NO.	WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO.
11. TITLE (Include Security Classification) The Civil War Campaigns of 1864-Operational and Tactical Defeat Leading to Strategic Victory					
12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) LTC George W. Powers, USA					
13a. TYPE OF REPORT Monograph		13b. TIME COVERED FROM _____ TO _____	14. DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) 88/2/5		15. PAGE COUNT 45
16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION					
17. COSATI CODES			18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)		
FIELD	GROUP	SUB-GROUP	*Politics, Operational Planning & Politics *The Wilderness		
			*Decisive/Climatic Battle *Petersburg		
			*Attrition Warfare *Campaigns of Sherman & Sheridan		
19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)					
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20. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED <input type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS			21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED		
22a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL LTC GEORGE W. POWERS			22b. TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) (913) 684-3437		22c. OFFICE SYMBOL ATZL-SWV

19. Abstract Continued

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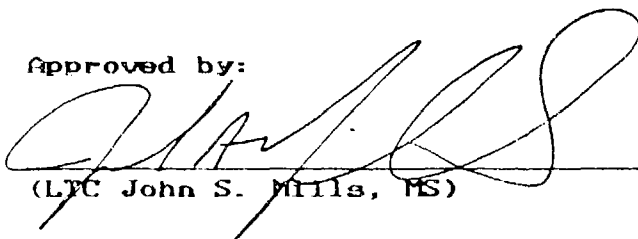
SCHOOL OF ADVANCED MILITARY STUDIES

MONOGRAPH APPROVAL

Name of Student: George W. Powers, LTC, Military Police

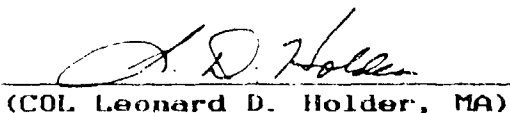
Title of Monograph: The Civil War Campaigns of 1864-
Operational and Tactical Defeat Leading
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ABSTRACT

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by LTC George W. Powers, USA

This monograph analyzes the three major Civil War campaigns of 1864 in regard to several of the precepts of military theory. It uses the Wilderness, Petersburg, and Atlanta Campaigns, which moved the United States of America into the era of modern warfare, as case studies of the applicability of traditional military theory to modern warfare.

The monograph first reviews the relationship between politics, strategy, operational planning and tactics, then discusses why these campaigns ended without the classic decisive, climactic battle. Next it offers an explanation of Grant's use of attrition warfare.

The monograph concludes that a truly amazing phenomenon occurred during this year of the war. While Grant held Lee to a grinding campaign of attrition, he released Generals Sherman and Sheridan for highly successful campaigns of maneuver warfare in Georgia and the Shenandoah Valley respectively. Sherman and Sheridan provided the only Union tactical and operational successes of 1864, and excitement over their accomplishments gained Lincoln reelection. In the Eastern Theater of Operations, meanwhile, Grant lost almost every operational and tactical contest, but secured for the United States of America strategic victory. The Confederacy, of course, had Robert E. Lee, who was a superb operational artist and tactician. Lee, however, forced onto the defensive behind extensive field fortifications, was fighting with a worn out army, against an enemy (Grant) with vastly superior manpower and resources who was forcing constant combat. Grant was intent on attrition warfare, and during 1864 went about bleeding the Confederate Army dry. The indications are that nations at war must understand military theory and its implications. There is little doubt that such a nation has a distinct advantage.

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INTRODUCTION

The last campaigns of the American Civil War -- The Wilderness, Petersburg, and Atlanta Campaigns -- occurred in the year 1864 and moved warfare into the modern era. They might not have been the last campaigns if President Lincoln had not awakened to some of the war's realities. During the winter of 1863-4, President Lincoln, realizing that the war could not be successfully prosecuted by his Cabinet, handed over complete control of all military operations to Ulysses S. Grant. In contrast, the Confederate war strategy remained in the hands of President Davis, with Robert E. Lee not appointed commander of all Confederate forces until 1865 when the South's cause was long since lost.

This monograph will focus primarily on Grant's and Lee's strategic and operational leadership, decisions and actions during 1864. Secondary emphasis will be on the superb campaigns of maneuver warfare conducted by Sherman and Sheridan. The monograph will utilize this rich segment of the Civil War to examine the relationship of military theory to its application on real world battlefields.

I will explore the relationship between politics, strategy, operational planning and tactics, specifically to discover their impact on these campaigns. Closely related to the analysis of the combatants' operational and tactical efforts is the question of why these campaigns ended without

the decisive, climactic battle that was historically so prevalent. Finally, this paper will discuss and evaluate Grant's use of attrition warfare as he moved the Army of the Potomac relentlessly from the Rapidan River to the town of Petersburg, Virginia.

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

"In the winter of war, 1864-65, as Jefferson Davis walked south from his domestic quarters in the Brockenborough Mansion to his offices in the magnificent Capitol that Thomas Jefferson had designed in Richmond, the President's heart knew what his mind would not admit: the war was winding down."¹

Jefferson Davis was unanimously elected Confederate President as a compromise candidate. In many ways, he was as much a minority President in the South as Lincoln was in the North. The Confederate Constitution varied significantly from its Federal counterpart and made it extremely difficult for the President to administer a government, much less to fight a war. The governmental structure drove Davis to the time-consuming and tedious task of working every action through the chairman of a congressional committee (i.e., legislative, finance, foreign affairs).²

President Davis worked diligently, if slowly, within the constraints of the Confederate legislative process, but he primarily viewed himself as a soldier. He was, after all, a West Point graduate, Class of 1828. He had served seven years

on the northwest frontier. He had fought and been severely wounded in the Mexican War. Davis had also been Franklin Pierce's Secretary of War. These experiences served him well in selecting officers and in creating and organizing Confederate army and war departments. They also encouraged Davis to retain and exercise supreme control over the Confederate military establishment and its conduct of the war.

The winter of 1864-65 found the Southern Ship of State floundering. The policy of States Rights had become extremely self-defeating in nature, creating a situation where the Confederacy was incapable of establishing a united warfighting effort. Inflation was out of control throughout the South, causing food riots and breaking the fighting morale. Within the government, many referred to President Davis as a tyrant, while others were plotting to depose him. Finally, the Confederate army was poorly equipped and supplied and basically worn out.

Throughout all this, President Davis continued to function as the commander-in-chief of the army. Essentially, all decisions and policies were those of the President. No Confederate general was placed in charge of all southern forces until 1865.

The Confederate political view of the war held that:

"...the Confederate States of America were the victims of aggression by the United States of America, whose people did not lend wholehearted support to this war of conquest. Therefore, a tenacious defensive resistance would be the best means calculated to wear down the will of the Northern people to win and, thus, lead them to abandon the war; or, that failing, hold out until foreign powers

intervened, a development on which considerable hope was long placed."³

Davis had relied heavily upon European intervention to scuttle the war and had no real foreign policy outside of establishing cotton as king. Unfortunately, Europe had learned to do without cotton and the last possibility of European intervention was destroyed with the announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation.⁴

In the early spring of 1864, much in the North also was precariously balanced. All these issues were in doubt: the outcome of the upcoming presidential election, the course of the powerful peace movement, the destruction of slavery, and -- of overwhelming importance -- whether the Union would remain intact or Confederate independence achieved. What President Lincoln needed most, the item that would help not only the Union but his own political future, was success on the battlefield.

"The menace to Lincoln's reelection ... came less from Republican factionalism, or as yet unorganized Democratic opposition, than from the fortunes of war."⁵

Other social and political indicators of the state of the Union included: the fall of the greenback to a dismal 33 cents on the gold dollar; the decline in volunteering for military service; and the initiation of a peace mission with the President's enthusiastic support. There has been speculation that if Davis had been skillful, when he met with this northern

peace mission, he could have caused havoc within Union politics by proposing, based on almost any terms, an armistice or a peace conference. Such a proposal would have stopped the fighting. Once stopped, it would have been almost impossible for the North to get it started again.⁶ Instead, Davis delivered an ultimatum:

"We will go on unless you acknowledge our right to self-government. We are not fighting for slavery. We are fighting for independence, and that, or extermination, we will have."⁷

This and one later peace effort in Toronto convinced the North that the Confederacy would consider no peace proposals that did not support southern independence.

So the war would go on and the need for military success, already enormous, would grow day by day. By February 1864, both President Lincoln and Secretary of War Stanton were disgusted with the recent operations of the Army of the Potomac. This opinion reflected very badly on the army commander, General George G. Meade, who had failed to take advantage of his military opportunities in the East.⁸ A search was now initiated by Lincoln and Stanton to find a successor for Meade.

At precisely this same time, Congressman Elihu B. Washburne, of Illinois, had taken up an unusual crusade of his own. The Congressman proposed to revive the seldom used rank of Lieutenant General for Illinoisan, Ulysses S. Grant, based on Grant's outstanding military accomplishments from Vicksburg to that point in the war.

In part because of Washburne's efforts and in part on a sense of desperation in the North, legislation for Grant was passed in both the House and Senate.⁹ Unfortunately, the promotion still faced a substantial hurdle -- Presidential approval. Despite his avowed disinterest, there was a significant popular movement to draft Grant as a presidential candidate. President Lincoln had never met Grant, was not familiar with him as a man or soldier and questioned Grant's true interest in presidential politics. Finally, after a personal meeting and considerable discussion, Lincoln became convinced that Grant had no interest in presidential politics, and was the best general for the job.

On 9 March 1864, Grant was promoted to Lieutenant General and given command of all Union forces. "At this point President Lincoln, realizing at last that a war cannot be successfully conducted by a Cabinet, handed over the complete control of all military operations to Grant...."¹⁰ Grant for his part understood the political necessity for a decisive military victory and immediately began planning for the campaigns of 1864.

STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL PLANNING

A study of Union and Confederate strategies reveals the dominance of Union strategy, as it imposed upon and colored many of the Confederate strategic options. Politically, the North was forced to fight an offensive war. The Union was also fighting a total war, fought for unconditional surrender and not for a favorable settlement.

"Whereas Solferino or Sadowa were decisive in ending a war by the concession of a province, the capture of Vicksburg and its army could not be decisive in this way; complete victory against a resolute national resistance was necessary in order to secure unconditional surrender. Thus, as in the Second World War, total military victory was essential in order to attain total political victory."¹¹

Although the Union political policy toward the war seems clear from the beginning of hostilities, the military strategy appears not to have received immediate attention, but simply and slowly evolved.

"The North drifted into the Civil War ... without so far as is known, any general plan for its prosecution having been considered or adopted, or any move made to bring together our most capable military men for such purpose. While there were more or less conferences in regard to separate campaigns, the war, as a whole, was allowed to drift from year to year without intelligent guidance under nominal commanders-in-chief until 1864, when, at length, it was turned over to a mastermind to direct and control it."¹²

Lack of a Union military strategy had not only lengthened the war, but had emboldened the peace party in the North. Fortunately, after March 1864, Grant provided comprehensive

central direction, based on a plan of action, that covered the coordinated movement of all northern forces. On 10 March 1864, Grant in his capacity as commander of all Union forces began to plan for his first campaigns. He had only eight weeks to work, for on 4 May 1864 both the Wilderness and Atlanta Campaigns were launched.

During March and April 1864, Grant decided on a strategy and formulated his operational plans. Previously each Union army had acted independently, enabling the Confederates to send support troops from an unopposed force to one that was under attack. Grant was determined to put a stop to this practice and have all of the Federal armies act in concert with one another.¹³

There was nothing complicated about Grant's plan. On the contrary, it was quite simple. Lee's army was to be Meade's objective in Virginia, and Johnston's army was to be Sherman's objective in Georgia. Sherman had been placed in command of the Union forces at Chattanooga when Grant came East. Meade's Army of the Potomac was to receive assistance by the advance of Sigel up the Shenandoah Valley and by the movement of Butler up the James River. Meanwhile, Grant decided that his place during this campaign was in Virginia with the Army of the Potomac.¹⁴ Years later Grant himself spoke of his plan:

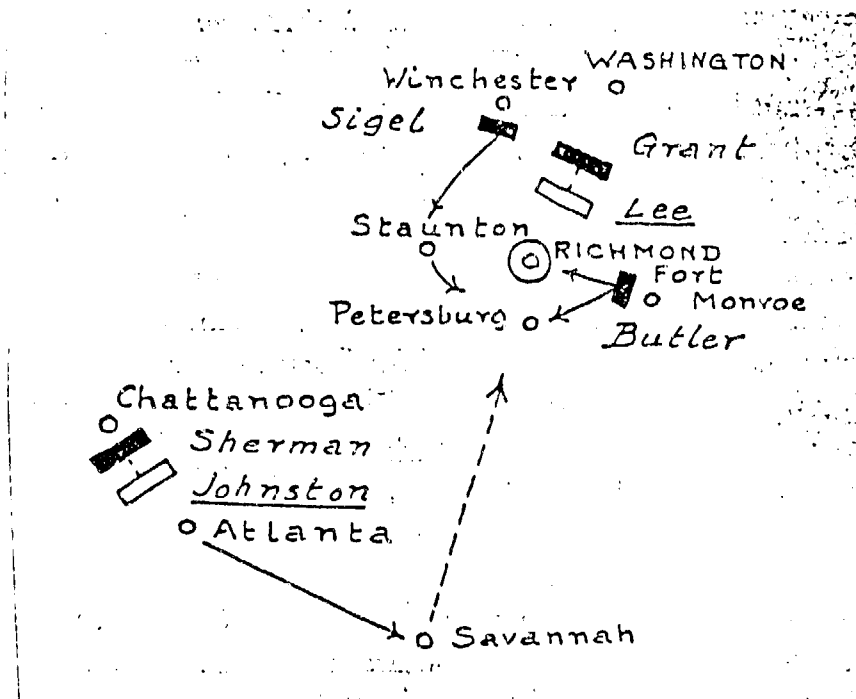
"... My general plan was to concentrate all the force possible against the Confederate armies in the field. There were but two such, as we have seen, east of the Mississippi and facing north. The Army of Northern Virginia, Gen. Robert E. Lee commanding, was on the south bank of the Rapidan river, confronting the Army

of the Potomac; the second, under Gen. Joseph E. Johnston was at Dalton, Georgia, opposed to Sherman, who was still at Chattanooga... Accordingly, I arranged for a simultaneous movement all along the line. Sherman was to move from Chattanooga, Johnston's army and Atlanta being his objective points. Crook, commanding in West Virginia, was to move from the mouth of the Gauley river with a cavalry force and some artillery, the Virginia and Tennessee railroad to be his objective. Either the enemy would have to keep a large force to protect their communications or see them destroyed, and a large amount of forage and provisions, which they so much needed, fall into our hands. Sigel was in command in the Valley of Virginia. He was to advance up the Valley, covering the north from an invasion through that channel as well while advancing as by remaining near Harper's Ferry. Every mile he advanced also gave us stores on which Lee relied. Butler was to advance by the James river, having Richmond and Petersburg as his objectives."15 (see map on page 9A)

Having made his plans Grant turned to execution. Grant realized that the South was on the decline, that the Confederate army was lacking supplies and equipment, and that casualties were becoming difficult to replace. He also knew that Lee was a maneuver warfare proponent, but one who could not now absorb heavy losses. Thus Grant believed that his operations and tactics must be consistently offensive. He was determined to close with Lee's army, reduce it in strength through constant attack and force Lee onto the defensive.

As the Wilderness Campaign commenced, the Federal army numbered approximately 118,000 men and 316 guns, organized into four infantry and one cavalry corps. The II Corps was under Hancock, V Corps was commanded by Warren, VI Corps was under Sedgwick, Burnside commanded the IX Corps, and Sheridan

CAMPAIGNS OF 1864



(Note - Grant wanted to fix Lee so Sherman could maneuver into his rear. Grant had been burned at Chickamauga when Lee transferred Longstreet's Corps by rail to aid Johnston. Fixing Lee was uppermost in Grant's plan.)

* J.F.C. Fuller, Grant and Lee, (Bloomington, 1957), p. 214.

commanded the cavalry corps. The Army of the Potomac was an awesome force for the day, well supplied and equipped.

In its military strategy, the South was worse off than the North.

"The Confederacy was unfortunate in its failure to work out a general strategy of the whole war... there was no large overall plan of defense and/or offense which was followed throughout the war. The responsibility for this lack of grand strategic plan rests on President Jefferson Davis."¹⁶

President Davis' strategic policy was simply an orientation towards a defense to counteract the Union's offensive strategy. This vague defensive strategy was perpetuated by Davis, in part, to convince the world that the Confederacy did not want war and that it would do nothing more than defend itself. This line of thinking held that the Confederate States of America were victims of aggression by the United States of America, whose population did not totally support this war of conquest. Thus, a persevering defense would wear down the will of the Union to win and lead to the abandonment of the war. Failing that, Davis would persist until foreign powers intervened. In practice the South relied on this alternative for most of the war.

Political pressures on Davis translated this Confederate strategy of defense into a very strict and inflexible strategy which, "...insisted that every inch of territory be defended".¹⁷ The President felt compelled to continue this inflexible approach for several reasons. First, he was convinced that once

southern territory was lost to Union soldiers, the area would be worthless to the Confederacy when and if retaken. Secondly, the loss of territory would jeopardize recognition of the South as a vital nation capable of defending itself. Finally, the retention of southern territory was necessary for supplies, equipment and recruitment. Considering his strategic alternatives President Davis once remarked that, "... general truth that power is increased by the concentration of an army is, under our peculiar circumstances, subject to modification, as the evacuation of any portion of territory involves not only the loss of supplies, but in every instance has been attended by a greater or less loss of troops."¹⁸ So Confederate strategy was one of territorial defense predicated on political, social, and logistical considerations. Unfortunately, this strategy was also generally reactive to Union operations.¹⁹

In the Spring of 1864 Lee apprehensively contemplated his possible courses of action for the upcoming campaign. On 5 April 1864, he made his decision and notified Davis that within his theater of operation Richmond was apparently Grant's objective. Lee also was of the opinion that the Wilderness was his ally, and that a major engagement should be fought on the Rapidan.²⁰

"Lee's whole strategy now depended upon holding this natural stronghold, of entrapping Grant in it, of preventing his army penetrating it, and so exhaust the patience and resources of the North. His idea was to bring his enemy to battle as soon as possible, and his

plan was an able one, namely, to let Grant cross the Rapidan and get thoroughly entangled in the forest, where numbers, cavalry and artillery were of little account, and there attack him in flank and force him to retire as he had forced away Hooker."²¹

From this we can see that Lee's objective was the destruction of the Army of the Potomac.

As the Wilderness Campaign commenced, the Army of Northern Virginia numbered 62,000 men and 224 guns organized into three infantry and one cavalry corps. Hill's Corps contained divisions commanded by Anderson, Heth and Wilcox. Ewell's Corps was made up of three divisions led by Edward Johnston, Early and Rodes. Only the divisions of Field and Kershaw remained in Longstreet's Corps. Pickett's division, normally with Longstreet, was to the South on the James River and did not join the Army of Northern Virginia until after the battle of Spottsylvania Courthouse. Hampton and Fitzhugh Lee commanded divisions which made up Stuart's Cavalry Corps. The army was in rags, half - starved and lacking in clothing, shoes and equipment. Desertions were frequent, for life in bivouac with the Army of Northern Virginia was unbearable. Finally, discipline within the army was terrible. This was not because the men were poor soldiers, but because the administration of the army was corrupt and abysmal.²² Lee had an impossible mission in front of him and precious few tools with which to perform the mission. This situation made his military accomplishments in 1864 that much more amazing.

CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

FROM THE WILDERNESS TO COLD HARBOR

"On May 4 and 5 all the Federal armies moved forward, on a common plan and towards a common centre: Grant on Lee, Sherman on Johnston, Sigel up the Valley, and Butler towards Richmond."24

Before daybreak on 4 May, the Army of the Potomac began crossing the Rapidan River below Lee's right flank. This movement literally plunged the Army of the Potomac into a jungle where numbers and artillery were of little value, where cavalry moved dismounted, where every nonessential wagon was a burden, and where regional familiarity was supremely important to success. Lee possessed the local knowledge and had no intention of awaiting Grant's attack. Before the Union army had finished crossing the river Lee was maneuvering to intercept it. (see map on page 13A)

Ewell's Corps moved on the Orange Turnpike and Hill's Corps advanced on the Orange Plank Road. Longstreet was ordered forward on Hill's right, but he was late in starting. Ewell's Corps was first to make contact with the Army of the Potomac on the morning of 5 May. The Army of the Potomac was taken by surprise, and Grant was forced to form his army for combat in the terrible terrain of the Wilderness. Warren's V Corps quickly became heavily engaged with Edward Johnson's Division. Rodes soon joined Johnson and Sedgwick's VI Corps



gave support to V Corps. When Early's Division arrived, a major battle resulted. Soon after, Ewell's end of the line became engaged, and Hill clashed with Hancock's II Corps on the Plank Road. The fighting went on all day and was described as,

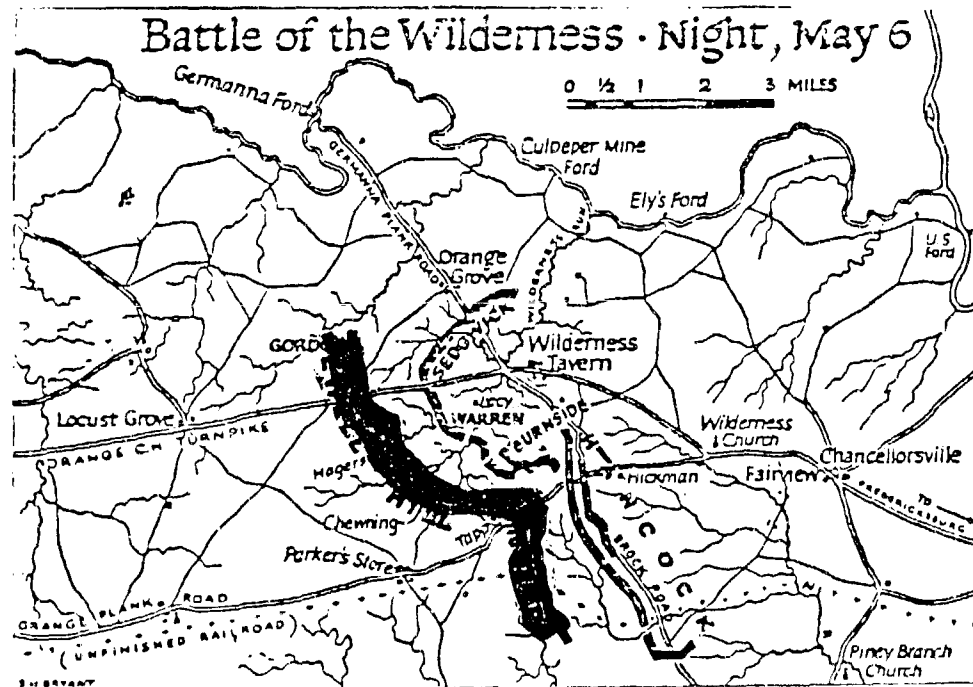
"...a wrestle as blind as midnight, a gloom that made manoeuvres impracticable, a jungle where regiments stumbled on each other and on the enemy by turns, firing sometimes into their own ranks, and guided often only by the crackling of the bushes or the cheers and cries that rose from the depths around."²⁵

By dark it was clear to both Grant and Lee that neither had gained the advantage.

Burnside joined Grant on the night of 5 May while Lee sent urgent orders to the still absent Longstreet to get forward and provide Hill support. On the 6th the fighting was much the same as on the 5th. (see map on page 14A) II Corps savagely attacked Hill's lines that morning; however, Longstreet was still not in position to provide support. The Confederates were forced back and the battle appeared lost. At this critical point, Longstreet arrived on the field. He sent Mahone to turn II Corps' left flank while simultaneously hitting its front. This effort was extremely successful. By noon Grant's left had been defeated. Longstreet now personally led Kershaw's Division in a pursuit of II Corps down the Plank Road. Unfortunately, Longstreet was mistaken for a Union soldier and was severely wounded by his own men.

Lee came forward to take charge of the attacking forces,

THE WILDERNESS CAMPAIGN OF 6 MAY



* Earl S. Miera, *The Last Campaign*, (New York, 1972), p. 56.

only to find that II Corps had moved behind a formidable line of double entrenchments. As the Confederates advanced, the first line of Union breastworks were set ablaze. Simultaneously, II Corps opened up with a murderous concentration of rifle and artillery fire from the second line of entrenchments. Although the Confederates, through sheer courage and tenacity, did reach the first line of breastworks, they were soon thrown back by the fierce fire. By nightfall, both sides had again fought to a standstill.

There is considerable disagreement among military historians whether this battle (the series of engagements 5 and 6 May) was indecisive or a loss for Grant. As May 6th drew to a close, Lee's lines were generally farther advanced than they had been the previous day and Grant was on the defensive. Losses were heavy with Grant's totaling 17,666 and Lee's, although unknown, were thought to be at least 7,750.

There was no major combat between the two armies on 7 May. That night Grant withdrew from Lee's front and moved his army South in the direction of Spottsylvania Courthouse. Lee, upon learning of Grant's move ordered Anderson (now commanding Longstreet's Corps) to move to Spottsylvania. As it happened, Anderson arrived at Spottsylvania ahead of Grant. While the Army of the Potomac moved toward Spottsylvania, Grant learned that:

"... Sherman's and Sigel's advances were progressing, but that Butler was in difficulties. In order to relieve pressure on Butler's army he ordered Sheridan and the whole of the Cavalry Corps to cut loose and to

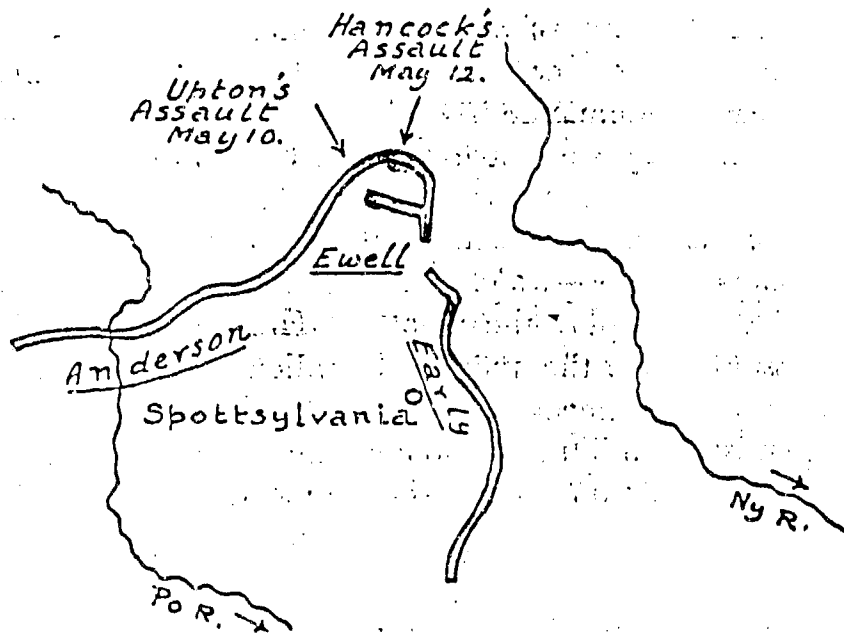
proceed on a raid against the north of Richmond."26

Following a brief meeting engagement, Lee entrenched his army at Spottsylvania between the Ny and Po Rivers. His line of breastworks resembled an inverted "V" with the apex toward the enemy.

Anderson held the left, Ewell the center and Hill's Corps, now commanded by Early because of an illness to Hill, held the right flank. The weak point was the apex -- later called the "Bloody Angle". On 10 May, Grant launched a limited assault under Colonel Upton (of II Corps) on the western side of the apex capturing a portion of the line and approximately 1200 prisoners. (see map on page 16A) This attack was so successful that early on 12 May, Grant employed the entire II Corps in a general attack on the apex. Although initially successful, this attack was eventually repulsed by massive Confederate counterattacks. After extremely bloody fighting, Upton and his men were left in an untenable position. Grant realized that Upton could do no more and ordered him to withdraw. Although the withdrawal was accomplished, it was done with considerable difficulty and the loss of 1000 of Upton's men. During these counterattacks on the "Bloody Angle" alone, Lee lost between 9,000 and 10,000 men and Grant 6,820.27

It was quiet for several days after the battle for the "Bloody Angle". On 18 May, Grant threw three corps against the Confederate lines and was again thrown back with huge losses.

SPOTTSYLVANIA



* J.F.C. Fuller, Grant and Lee, (Bloomington, 1957), p. 217.

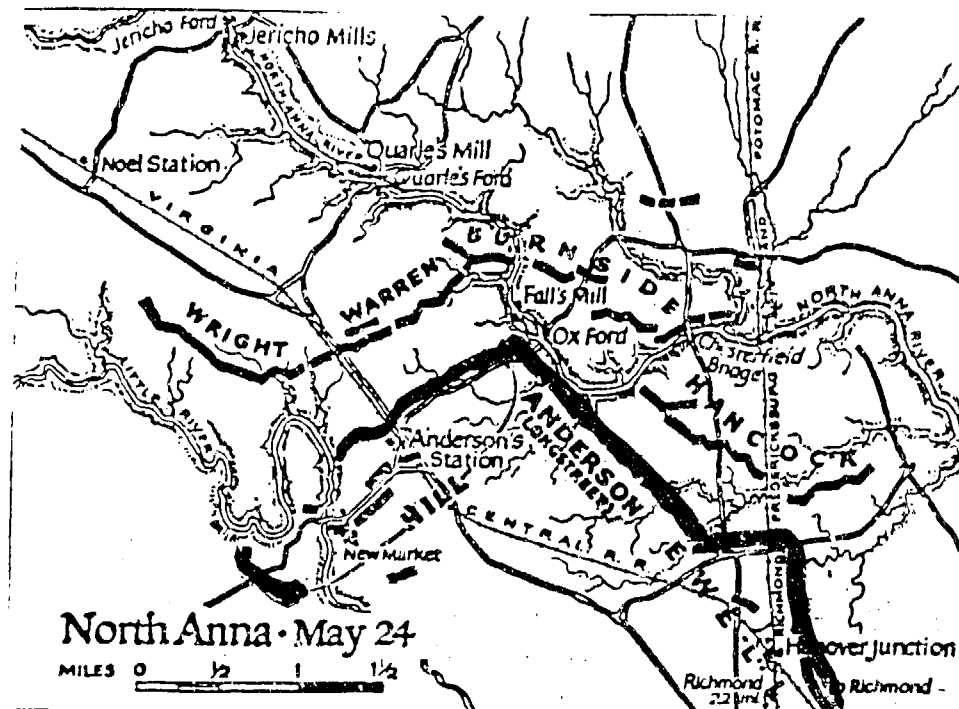
Grant now ceased his efforts at Spottsylvania. The Federal losses at Spottsylvania totalled approximately 17,000 while Confederate casualties probably numbered 10,000. General Wright had assumed command of the V Corps on 9 May, when General Sedgwick was killed by a sharpshooter. On 11 May, General Stuart had been mortally wounded at Yellow Tavern and Wade Hampton had taken command of the cavalry.

Meanwhile, Beauregard, the commander of the forces at Petersburg, had defeated General Butler on 16 May at Drewry's Bluff. About the same time, Breckinridge gained a victory over Sigel in the Shenandoah Valley at New Market.

On the night of 20 May, Grant disengaged himself from Lee at Spottsylvania and moved South toward the North Anna River. Lee discovered Grant's move, reached the North Anna first and placed himself in a strong position between the Union army and Richmond, at Hanover Junction immediately South of the river. (see map on page 17A) Lee now occupied entrenchments that had been constructed the previous winter and were particularly formidable. Further, Lee's lines were positioned so that an attacker was forced to divide his army on both sides of a stream that was difficult to ford at the contested point. Realizing the cost of an assault, Grant decided to attempt another flanking movement. ✓

"On the afternoon of the 25th he withdrew his forces across the North Anna, and directed Meade to move on Hanover Town. This movement, which was a complex one on account of the proximity of the two armies, was carried out successfully, and a new battle front was established on Totopotomoy Creek. Lee followed suit,

NORTH ANNA RIVER



* Earl S. Miera, The Last Campaign, (New York, 1972), p. 86.

both armies drifting southwards, Lee covering Richmond and Grant hoping against hope to compel Lee to come out of his trenches. By June 1 both armies confronted each other in the vicinity of Old and New Cold Harbor; Lee's right flank resting on the Chickahominy and his left extending north of Gaine's Mill, the locality in which McClellan was repulsed in 1862. "28

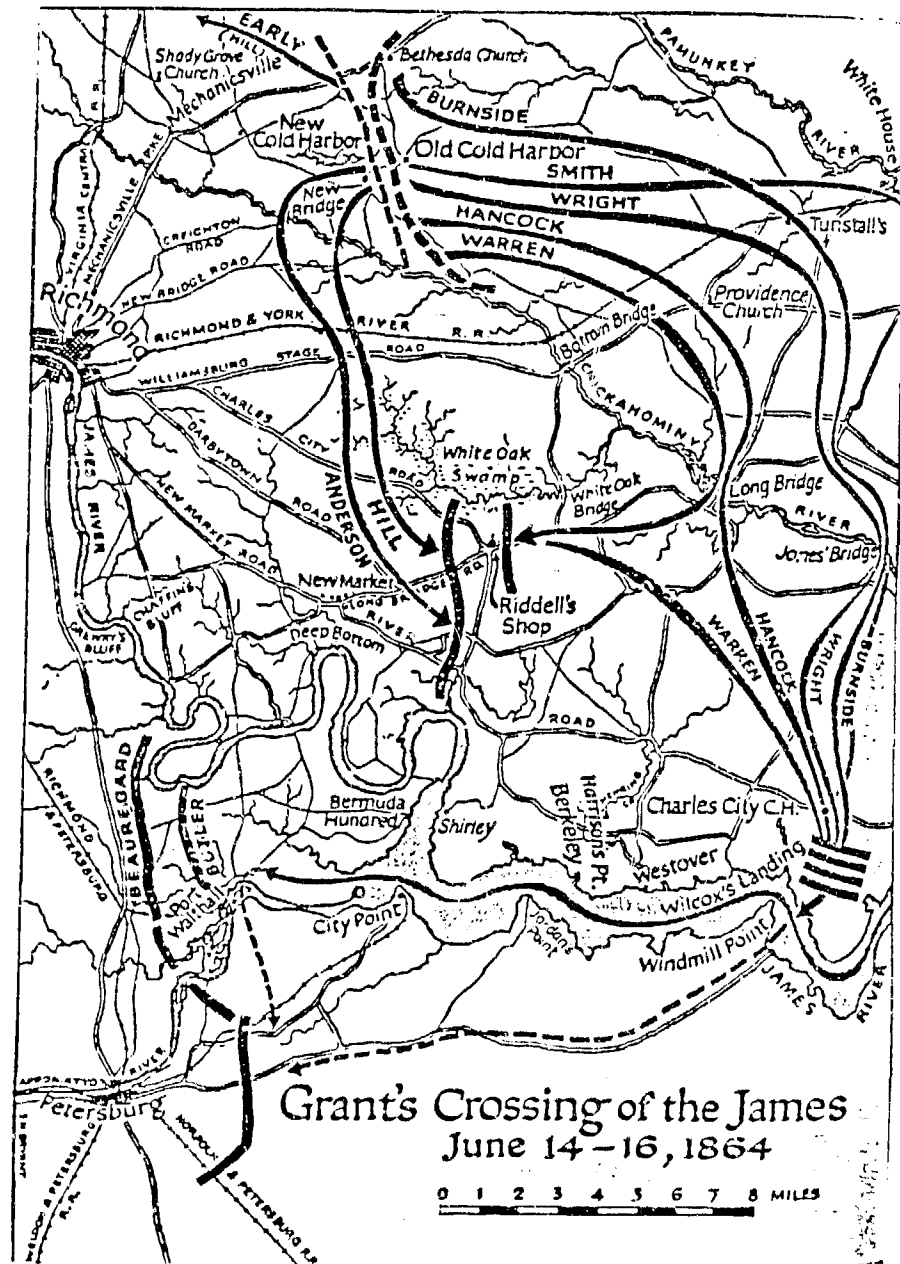
On June 3, Grant attacked the Confederate forces located, once more, behind formidable field fortifications. The battle, the bloodiest yet of the campaign, lasted less than a half hour. Union losses were extremely heavy while Confederate casualties were quite low. For Grant, Cold Harbor was a tactical disaster of the first magnitude.

THE PETERSBURG OPERATION

Grant lost more than 50,000 men from the time he crossed the Rapidan through Cold Harbor. During this period he had also received approximately the same number of replacements. Lee's losses were in the neighborhood of 32,000 but he received only about 15,000 reinforcements. 29

Grant was on the move again. On 13 June, he began moving from Lee's front at Cold Harbor and crossed the James River below the mouth of the Appomattox River. (see map on page 18A) While Grant was moving, the XVIII Corps, commanded by General Smith, attacked the Confederate works at Petersburg. (The XVIII Corps, assigned to General Butler's command and located on the Chickahominy, was detached from Butler to seize Petersburg.)

GRANT'S CROSSING OF THE JAMES RIVER



* Earl S. Miera, *The Last Campaign*, (New York, 1972), p. 126.

Although the Petersburg defenses were held only by a small number of southern troops, the Union attack was repulsed. That night Confederate reinforcements began moving into the South's lines around Petersburg.

On 16 June the Union army attacked with heavier forces and fighting continued through the 17th. Grant's intent was to capture Petersburg quickly, before Lee could cross the James with large numbers of reinforcements. During the night of 17 June, Beauregard pulled back his defensive forces and occupied a second line of entrenchments closer to Petersburg. The 8th saw a vicious Union attack on these new entrenchments defeated with heavy losses.³⁰

By 18 June, the entire Army of the Potomac -- some 107,000 strong -- had arrived on the battlefield. (see map on page 19A) For some inexplicable reason Lee was not immediately aware of Grant's maneuver, on 13 June, towards Petersburg. It was not until the night of the 18th that Lee's army began arriving at Beauregard's positions. Enroute however, he had pulled two divisions from the Richmond defenses. His army now numbered about 54,000 as they moved into some thirty miles of Confederate defensive positions around Petersburg.

"Supplies for the Confederates reached Petersburg and Richmond from the south and southwest over three railroads. The Weldon road running almost due south was most exposed to the raids of the enemy. The Southside road ran westward from Petersburg to Lynchburg and the Danville road ran southwest from Richmond. It was Grant's aim to cut these railroads."³¹

On 21 June, Grant made his first attempt to cut the Weldon road. He sent the II and VI Corps, under Hancock's command, West of Jerusalem Plank Road. (see map page 20A) On the 22d, they were attacked by a Confederate division under Mahone. II Corps was defeated. The next day Mahone also drove VI Corps from the field. On 23 June, a substantial force of Union cavalry, under Wilson, was defeated near Ream's Station by Wade Hampton and W.H.F. Lee. Wilson's cavalry retreated toward Union lines after inflicting moderate damage on the railroad.

The most significant event during the siege of Petersburg was the explosion of the mine at Elliott's salient.

"At that point the Federal lines under Burnside were but a hundred yards away, and in their rear was a deep ravine from which Pennsylvania miners drove a main gallery for 510 feet under Burnside's works, the intervening space, and to well under the Elliott salient in the Confederate line. From this main gallery lateral ones were extended right and left. In these works were placed 8,000 pounds of powder, and the appliances for its explosion under Confederate works and the guns of Pegram's and Elliott's batteries. Grant proposed to spring this mine and thus blow open a way through the Confederate intrenchments by which he could send three of his corps, nearly half of his army, and capture Petersburg."32

The explosion of the mine was to occur at 0315 hours on 30 July. Burnside's IX Corps was then to lead the main attack supported by V and XVIII Corps. The mine did not explode until 0545 hours and created a crater 200 feet long, 50 feet wide and 25 feet deep. The southern troops were so surprised and frightened that they temporarily abandoned 500 yards of the

entrenchments. The Union assault, however, again proved a failure and cost nearly 3500 lives. Burnside had failed to clear his front of obstructions. His assault troops were forced to advance on an excessively restrictive front that first caused congestion, then confusion, and finally panic. Further, many of the Union officers sought safety to the rear while awaiting the explosion and then were not on hand to lead the assault.³³

During mid-August Hancock led two corps in an unsuccessful attack on the Confederate lines North of the James River. On 19 August, V Corps, while advancing toward Globe Tavern on the Weldon Road, was attacked by Hill. The engagement was indecisive. However, V Corps was forced to entrench in order to hold their position. Grant quickly withdrew II Corps from North of the James and moved it rapidly into support of V Corps. On 24 August, II Corps joined V Corps. Together the two corps began an advance. Hill, who had been reinforced, attacked and drove II Corps from the field.

Meanwhile, in an act of desperation, Early was sent from Petersburg across the Potomac River to advance on Washington. The hope was to draw Union siege troops from Lee's front at Petersburg. On 9 July, on the banks of the Monocacy River, Early met and defeated Lew Wallace. Two days later he was on the outskirts of Washington. Before he could attack, however, Union reinforcements arrived. Early was forced to withdraw back across the Potomac.

From 21 June, when Grant began the siege of Petersburg, the ultimate defeat of the Confederacy was daily becoming more certain. Between 21 June and the end of October, Grant waged continuous operations on Petersburg and the railroads. Although he had not won a single engagement during this time, he had compelled Lee to focus exclusively on the defense of Petersburg.

THE CAMPAIGNS OF SHERIDAN AND SHERMAN

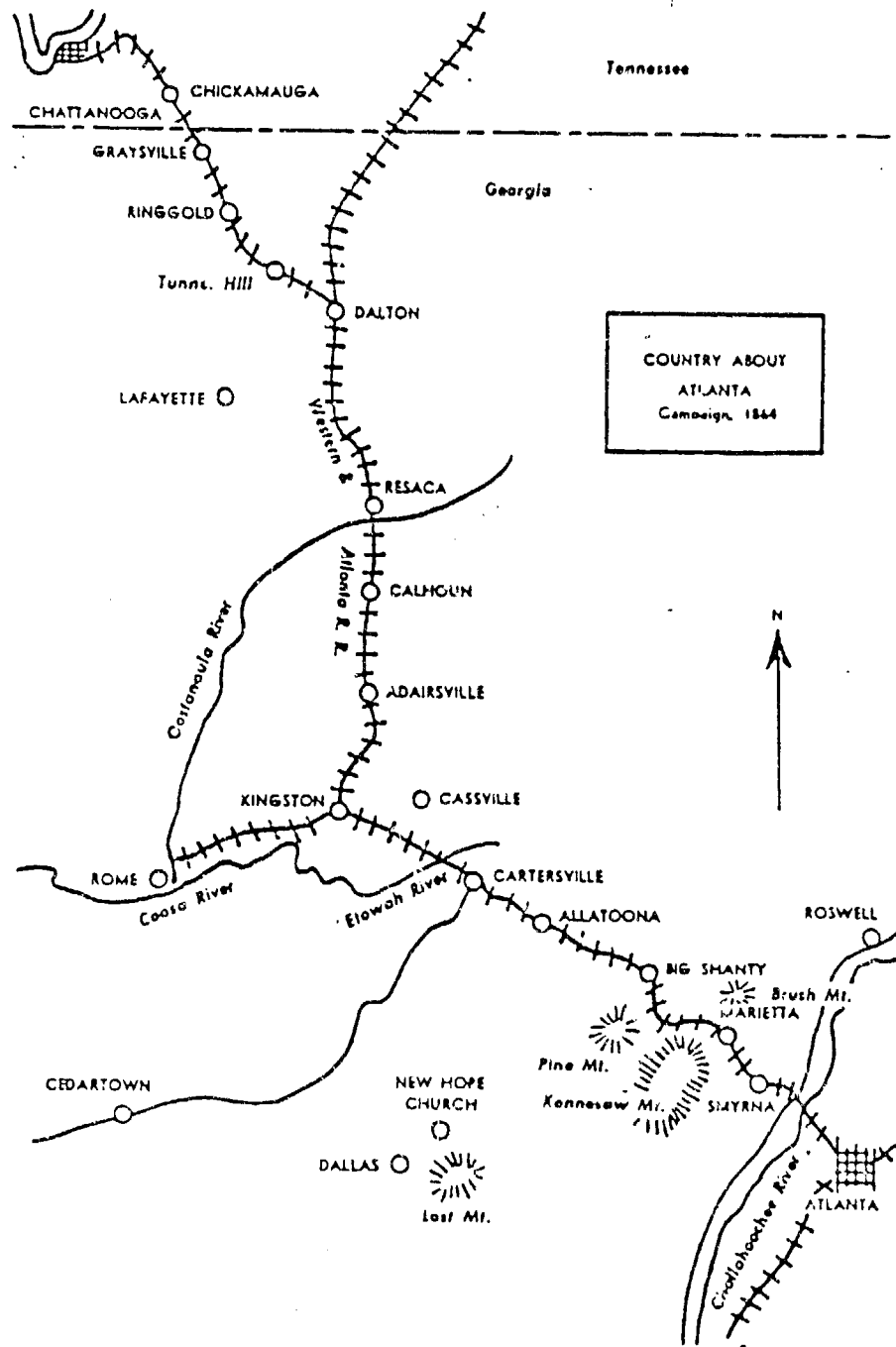
While Grant was maneuvering and fighting from the Wilderness to Petersburg, two other campaigns were in progress. In the Shenandoah Valley, on 15 May, Sigel had been badly defeated at Newmarket.

" In order to close the Valley Grant determined systematically to devastate it, and to carry out this work Sheridan was given command of the troops in that area on 7 August. "36

Sheridan, on 19 September, convincingly defeated Early at Opequon Creek. Pursuing him closely, Sheridan again defeated him at Fisher's Hill on 22 September and again on 19 October at Cedar Creek.

In the West, Sherman moved forward from Chattanooga to Dalton on May 5, 1864. (see map on page 22a) Sherman's forces consisted of: the Army of the Cumberland, under Thomas; the Army of the Tennessee, led by McPherson; and the Army of the Ohio, commanded by Schofield. The cavalry was led by Kilpatrick and Stoneman. This combined Union force totalled 100,000 men

ATLANTA CAMPAIGN



* Barron Deaderick, *Strategy in the Civil War*, (Harrisburg, 1946), p. 130.

and 254 guns.

Opposing Sherman at Dalton was the Confederate Army of the Tennessee commanded by Joseph Johnston. Johnston's army was formed into two corps under Hardee and Hood, with the cavalry commanded by Wheeler. This army was heavily entrenched at Dalton and totalled approximately 75,000. 36

"Grant's instructions to Sherman, given in his confidential letter of 4 April, were, to move against Johnston's army, to break it up, and to get into the interior of the enemy's country as far as he could, inflicting all the damage possible against their war resources.

"Sherman's first objective therefore was Johnston's army, and the second, his base at Atlanta, 85 miles from Dalton. In his Memoirs, General Sherman says, 'Atlanta was known as the Gate-City of the South, was full of foundries, arsenals, and machine-shops, and I knew that its capture would be the death-knell of the Southern Confederacy.' It was a large town, of great strategic importance, the junction of railways leading to Chattanooga, Richmond, the Atlantic coast, and Montgomery, Alabama." 37

Sherman decided he would conduct a maneuver warfare campaign. He would gain contact with Johnston, pin him down, and then by outflanking him, force him to relinquish his position and fall back. This tactic proved successful at Dalton, again on the Oostanaula River, at Etowah, Allatoona, New Hope Church and Marietta. On 18 June, Sherman attacked Johnston at Kenesaw Mountain. Although the attack was not particularly successful, Johnston, on 2 July, withdrew to the Chattahoochee River. Here on 17 July, Davis replaced him with General Hood.

"Imaginative and fertile in resources, Sherman saw

clearly that in spite of his numerical superiority every mile he advanced would lengthen his communications and so reduce his strength. He determined, therefore, not to do what Johnston wished him to do, namely, attack him in strongly fortified positions; but instead, by constant maneuver, to keep a grip on him whilst Grant was hammering Lee in the East."38

Hood attacked Sherman three times, was defeated each time, and suffered heavy losses. Hood was forced to fall back on Atlanta, where, because Sherman continued to press him closely, Hood's position became untenable. On 30 August, Hood learned that a large Union force was moving to Jonesborough, south of Atlanta. In a countermove, he sent Hardee, with two corps, to pursue the Union force. Hardee found the Union force well entrenched, attacked anyway, and was defeated.

" The failure necessitated the evacuation of Atlanta, says Hood; Thirty-four thousand prisoners at Andersonville, Georgia, in my rear compelled me to place the army between them and the enemy, thus preventing me at that time from moving on his communications and destroying his depot of supplies at Marietta."39

Atlanta was evacuated by the Confederates on the night of 1 September. Hood moved his army to Palmetto Station, southwest of Atlanta, and there moved behind entrenchments. 40

To prevent Hood from striking at his long lines of communications, Sherman sent Thomas and a large force back to Chattanooga. Leaving one corps in Atlanta, Sherman moved toward Allatoona arriving in time to save the garrison from defeat. Hood then retired toward Rome, Georgia. By 11 October, Sherman

realized that he could not catch Hood. He then suggested to Grant that he discontinue the chase and instead move on Charleston or Savannah. Grant, once convinced that Thomas could hold the line of the Tennessee, approved Sherman's recommendation.

On 15 November, Sherman set out from Atlanta heading a force of 60,000 and arrived at Savannah on 21 December.

" Though on the way he was but weakly opposed, beyond all question his march had a decisive strategical and political influence on the war, for the destruction he wrought in Georgia, which was estimated at 100,000,000 dollars had a most demoralizing effect on the whole of the Confederacy, and particularly on Lee's army, thousands of his men deserting to their homes in order to succour their families." 41

Meanwhile, Hood moved northward compelling Thomas to retreat to Nashville. From Nashville, Thomas sent out General Schofield and the Army of the Ohio as a covering force. Schofield's actions led to the battle of Franklin. Although the battle pushed Schofield back to Nashville, Hood's army was crippled by 6,300 casualties. Thomas, now outnumbering Hood by a ratio of 2 to 1, attacked and defeated him on 15 December.

Thus the defeat of Hood at Nashville and the occupation of Savannah ended the Union campaigns of 1864. The end of the year brought the end of the war into sight. Lincoln had been reelected President, thanks primarily to the excitement caused by the victories of Sherman and Sheridan. Additionally, Lee was still well fixed and the Shenandoah Valley had been cleared of Confederate troops. It now seemed clear that unless Sherman

could be stopped, the Confederacy's fate was sealed.

ANALYSIS

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICS, STRATEGY, OPERATIONAL PLANS AND TACTICS

By 1864, the Confederacy was politically, psychologically, economically and militarily "on the brink". The continuation of a tenacious defense while awaiting foreign intervention was now folly. The Emancipation Proclamation had destroyed that dream for good. A tough defense while the Union became disenchanted with the war was at least possible, particularly if significant Union victories were not achieved rapidly on the battlefield. Even this hope was dim.

The Confederate Government stood firmly by their war policy of independence or extermination. Further, it was general knowledge in the South that the Union political leadership would never voluntarily accept Confederate independence. To obtain, then, the political goal of independence, the Confederacy was required to continue the war. By 1864, they were losing fighting strength rapidly, while the Union's warfighting capacity was growing. The Confederacy had to win numerous and decisive battles and campaigns, humiliate the Union, and strip it of its confidence to win. The South had to drive the North to the negotiation table willing to accept Confederate independence. The Confederacy had to do it quickly before they themselves collapsed from exhaustion.

The Union was in far better shape than the South

economically, but they too had significant problems. The North needed meaningful victories to quiet the Peace Party and improve morale. Presidential elections were to occur in 1864. Lincoln needed military successes and the hope of final victory, if he was to have any chance for reelection.

It is interesting that although both the Confederacy and the Union quickly identified their desired "end state" for the Civil War, neither side thoughtfully formulated a military strategy to prosecute the war, insuring that end state. Notwithstanding the fact that both military strategies seemed to have merely evolved as the war progressed, it appears that eventually the Union did the better job.

President Lincoln, by the winter of 1863-64, realized that it was necessary to find a general to command all the Union armies, and then allow that commander, without constant political interference, to formulate and execute a military strategy. In Grant, Lincoln found the right man for the job. Once Grant was promoted and made commander of all Union forces, Lincoln, for the first time, put his complete trust in a general. This trust and non-interference allowed Grant to truly plan and execute campaigns and to synchronize the activities of all the Union theaters of operation.

Conversely, the Confederacy never did turn over the reins of military strategy to the military, nor ensure that the military activities of their theaters of operation were coordinated and in concert with political goals. This was a

serious mistake. It is true that Lee did become commander of all Confederate forces in 1865, however, by that time it was too late -- the war was already lost.

The Confederate strategy of defense, that evolved through President Davis, was basically sound and the only reasonable strategy under the circumstances. However, it was wrong to translate this defensive strategy into the strategy they called "territorial defense" (similar to a forward defense today), rather than a more useful "flexible defense" (similar to mobile defense). A flexible defense -- the trading of space for time and selectively relinquishing territory to facilitate massing forces at a critical point -- may have produced more victories and defeated more incursions into the South. It also may have won the war by producing a rapid series of operational and tactical northern defeats, discouraging the Union and forcing it to the negotiation table.

Operationally, defense is defined as, " a coordinated effort by a force to defeat an attacker and prevent him from achieving his objectives". 42 The policy of territorial defense caused the Confederacy to be weak everywhere and to always defend well forward. The Confederate Army clung to territory that was unimportant strategically. Complete destruction of attacking Union forces usually could not be achieved because of simultaneous actions elsewhere, which restricted the Confederate Army's ability to mass. Finally, the Confederate advantage of interior lines, with its inherent capabilities for swift

concentration of forces, was significantly weakened by this strategy.

FM 100-5, Operations, states that:

"Operational Art is the employment of military forces to attain strategic goals in a theater of war or theater of operations through the design, organization, and conduct of campaigns and major operations." 43

The Union's political goals, as previously discussed, were the defeat of the Confederate forces and the reunification of the United States of America. The campaigns of 1864 were the last major campaigns of the war. They brought the war's end into sight and directly attained the North's strategic goals.

Strictly speaking, the war did not end with the culmination of these campaigns. Because of this should we say that Grant failed? I think not! The campaigns of 1864 were strategic successes. The war was won; it would just be several months until this fact was realized. Grant's greatest success in 1864 came as a strategist. Specifically, it was Sherman's Atlanta Campaign, as much as the Wilderness and Petersburg Campaigns, which brought the Confederacy to the brink of collapse. The Atlanta Campaign was a success strategically, operationally and tactically. It not only devastated the South but caused havoc with Confederate lines of communication. Further, it severely demoralized not only the civilian population but also the Confederate Army. Operationally, it was effective in limiting the South's use of their interior lines,

and precluded southern forces from reinforcing the Army of Northern Virginia.

At the theater of operations level, Grant's great success was the crossing of the James River on 15, 16 and 17 June. This was a particularly difficult and dangerous maneuver for Grant. To accomplish it, Grant first strongly entrenched his front and then under cover of darkness withdrew his army. The movement was successful within close proximity to Lee's army and in Confederate territory that was teeming with spies. Grant had planned to seize Petersburg before Lee could come to the garrison's support. He probably would have succeeded were it not for the inexcusable delay and caution of General Smith.

The operational use of Sigel in the Shenandoah Valley also appears to be an appropriate decision by Grant. Grant knew that the Valley was a major supply source for the Confederates. Additionally, he knew that an unopposed Confederate force in the Shenandoah Valley would threaten Washington, cause political hysteria, and require immediate military action to secure the capitol. The real problem in the Valley was not the operational concept, but Sigel's incompetence.

On the less complimentary side, Grant's operational use of Butler's force was a disaster. Butler should have been ordered only to Petersburg. He should never have been allowed the option of capturing Richmond. Butler did not have enough troops to take Richmond and yet he had too many troops for the Confederate force he opposed at Petersburg. Grant should have

ordered Butler only to Petersburg and then taken troops away from him for use elsewhere. It also did not help that Butler was a politician, not a soldier, who was forced on Grant. Had he been an imaginative leader, willing to take risks, he could have quickly seized Petersburg as Beauregard's reinforcements slowly came up from the South.

The basic reason for Grant's failure operationally, however, was that he could not maneuver Lee out from behind his field fortifications. He could never hold Lee's front and at the same time threaten his flanks. With all his turning maneuvers Grant was unable to reach Lee's communications -- to get between Lee's army and Richmond -- and thus force open combat. True, he did move progressively closer to Richmond, but this was not his objective. His objective was Lee's army and this he was unable to destroy in a decisive battle.

On the Confederate side, Lee performed well within the context of a theater of operations. He anticipated almost every maneuver that the Union army made and took prompt action to meet it. Although sorely missing the skills of such generals as Jackson, Stuart, and Longstreet, Lee showed great skill in adopting the defense against a formidable enemy. He consistently maintained his interior lines. With the large supply base of Richmond within his constant control, Lee could always fall back on that city. Working from his interior lines he prosecuted his operations to ensure that the Union was, likewise, kept on their exterior lines.

At the operational level, Lee performed poorly only once. This occurred when Grant successfully moved from Lee's front at Cold Harbor, crossed the James River and threatened Petersburg. There is not universal agreement as to why Lee was slow to react to Grant's attempt to cross the James. However, it appears that poor reconnaissance and a lack of information on the enemy may have facilitated Lee's uncharacteristic response.

Although Lee performed magnificently on the defense, a point made earlier must be reiterated. Once Lee was forced onto the defensive, whatever remaining ability the Confederacy had to win the war was destroyed. The Union had to be forced to the negotiation table quickly. Lee could not further that end, on the defense, against a determined opponent like Grant. The Union was triumphing by the use of sheer power. Grant had employed superior numbers and resources to lock Lee in continuous battle. He then simply traded battle casualties until the Confederate Army was bled to death. This attrition strategy was all the more successful because of simultaneous offensives in each theater of operations. Because of the operations of Sherman and others, no other southern force could come to Lee's assistance. Tactically and operationally Lee won almost every battle. However, Grant knew that if he could continue to press, exhaust Lee's manpower, and avoid his own defeat in detail, he would prevail strategically.

Grant's actions during 1864 are similar to the situation in Europe in 1813 and 1814. The allied coalition fighting

against Napoleon knew that the French Army was not the same fine fighting force that had marched into Russia months earlier. The French Army after the ordeal in Russia was a tired, ill equipped and supplied, and an inexperienced force of new recruits that was deteriorating on a daily basis. The Fourth Coalition, like Grant, adopted attrition warfare and did not become discouraged when their own armies were tactically defeated. They, like Grant, knew their enemy and realized that they could win strategically by systematically trading battle casualties and avoiding decisive defeat of their own armies. The key to both of these strategic victories was the commander's knowledge of his enemy and his singlemindedness of purpose.

Tactically, Lee demonstrated a true genius for using natural terrain in positioning his army for the defense. His flanks at Spottsylvania, the North Anna River, and at Cold Harbor were secured by major streams. These bodies of water made it extremely difficult for the Union forces to maneuver against the Confederate flanks without crossing water, and dividing the Union army.

Grant, from the campaign's start, employed the operational and tactical offense. Ideally, he should have utilized the operational offense and the tactical defense. He needed to maneuver Lee into such a position that Lee could escape only by attacking at a disadvantage. This would have saved Union lives and should have been within Grant's ability, for the Army of Northern Virginia was literally on its last

legs. That Grant could not utilize this tactic is, undoubtedly, a very favorable comment on Lee's superb operational and tactical ability.

Throughout the campaigns of 1864 the tactics of Grant and his subordinate commanders, except for Sherman and Sheridan, were generally poor. At Cold Harbor Grant felt compelled to attack Lee's entrenched front after failing to maneuver his flank. This attack was the result of real or imagined political pressure on Grant. The pressure came from Union politicians who were still looking to Grant for that, as yet elusive, decisive northern victory in the East. Even assuming that Grant should have attacked, his techniques were faulty. First, he postponed his assault for twenty-four hours and gave Lee precious time to strengthen his, by now famous, defenses. Second, he ordered an attack along the entire length of Lee's defensive position, rather than massing his artillery and manpower at a selected point. Making casualties worse during the attack, each of Grant's divisions were taken in enfilade as well as brutal frontal fire. For Grant, Cold Harbor was a tactical and operational disaster of the first magnitude.

Unfortunately, Grant and his officers did not seem to learn any tactical lessons from these battles. During all of 1864, he seldom took advantage of his artillery firepower. Rarely did he mass and concentrate his artillery to weaken a position prior to an attack.

Throughout the Wilderness and Petersburg Campaigns Lee

made extensive use of field fortifications. An engineer by upbringing, and gifted with a tactical eye for defensive positions, after 7 May, Lee fought with entrenchments in a way that prompts the greatest respect. The following quotation shows the awe that the Union soldiers had for the Confederate fortification efforts.

"The great feature of this campaign is the extra-ordinary use made of earthworks.... When our lines advances, there is the line of the enemy, nothing showing but the bayonets, and the battle-flags stuck on the top of the works. It is a rule that when the Rebels halt, the first day gives them a good rifle pit; the second a regular infantry parapet with artillery in position; and the third a parapet with an abattis in front and entrenched batteries behind. Sometimes they put this three days' work into the first twenty-four hours. Our men can, and do, do the same; but remember, our object is offense - to advance. You would be amazed to see how this country is intersected with field works, extending for miles and miles in different directions and marking the different strategic lines taken up by the two armies, as they warily move about each other." **

THE DECISIVE/CLIMACTIC BATTLE

As has already been seen, the Wilderness and Petersburg Campaigns did not contain that decisive, climactic battle that military history loves so well and that allows events to rapidly come to a focused conclusion. FM 101-5-1, Operational Terms and Symbols, defines a decisive engagement as:

"An engagement in which a unit is considered fully committed and cannot maneuver or extricate itself. In the absence of outside assistance, the action must be fought to a conclusion and either won or lost with the forces at hand." **

Although agreeing with the above definition, I must take it further. The decisive, climactic battle is also that fight in which results are so decisive that the campaign goal(s) is achieved and fighting is generally terminated.

The Union operational objective in the eastern theater was the destruction of the Army of Northern Virginia and secondarily the capture of Richmond. Within forty-eight hours of crossing the Rapidan River, Grant had forced Lee onto the defensive. Lee had found, that in spite of the Wilderness and the shelter it afforded, sheer numbers of men and artillery pieces count in the end. He was forced to move to the defense behind entrenchments. However, Grant was unable to maneuver Lee into a situation requiring Lee to engage in an open, decisive, climactic battle, which would allow for the destruction of the Confederate Army.

Lack of the decisive, climactic battle is due in part to the varied abilities of the two opposing generals, and the great difference in remaining combat power and resources. However, it is also the result of the trench warfare as an outgrowth of the rifled bullet. The introduction of the rifled musket to North America in the mid - 19th century significantly altered the range and accuracy of the rifle. Now late in the war, the rifle was appearing in significant numbers and replacing the smooth bore even in the Confederate army. Unfortunately, neither Grant nor Lee truly understood the impact that this technological advancement was having on the conduct of war.

The increase of range and accuracy made the battlefield larger and more lethal. Alterations in tactics were necessary to offset this lethality, but none were developed. Thus the armies, particularly the Confederate Army, naturally moved to the entrenchment as a way to escape the lethality and preserve manpower. Increased battlefield lethality, the use of entrenchments and the lack of the decisive, climactic battle signalled a major change in the nature of warfare and labeled the Wilderness Campaign as the United States' first campaign in the era of modern warfare.

Lee had quickly lost all ability to conduct offensive operations, while Grant learned a bloody, if unnecessary, lesson concerning an entrenched enemy, particularly during the Battle of Cold Harbor. Here Grant decided that Lee's front could not be successfully attacked, but he was not tactician enough to attack Lee's flank or rear. For these reasons Lee was able to avoid a decisive, climactic battle and extend the life of the Confederacy for another year.

GRANT'S CAMPAIGN OF ATTRITION

On 9 April 1864 Grant wrote Meade: " Lee's army will be your objective point. Wherever Lee's army goes you will go also." *6 Grant now commenced a classic campaign of attrition warfare. He realized that Lee favored maneuver, that the Confederate cause was on the decline and that the South could

neither accept nor sustain heavy casualties. He determined that Lee's army must be reduced in strength by constant attack, that it must be forced onto the defensive, and that once it was lowered to the defense it would lose freedom of movement while experiencing continued attrition.

FM 101-5-1, Operational Terms and Symbols, defines attrition as: "The reduction in effectiveness of a force caused by loss of personnel and material." 47 There is little doubt that Grant, although he maneuvered repeatedly, settled into a prolonged campaign of attrition. Grant's real strength in this campaign was his focus and perseverance toward this attrition warfare. Although the Union attacks during the Wilderness and Petersburg Campaigns were tactical and operational failures that were repeatedly stopped and/or repulsed, Grant refused to consider himself beaten for he saw that his strategy was in fact working. His continual hammering of Lee's army, coupled with Sherman's campaign of maneuver, brought the Confederacy to collapse. Albeit the loss of nearly three times the casualties of the South during the campaigns in the East, Grant clearly saw the political and military necessity of an attrition strategy.

There is little doubt that Lee was a superior operational artist and tactician. However, Grant knew his opponent well. He was familiar not only with Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia, but with the rapidly deteriorating condition of the Confederacy as a nation. Once Grant discovered that he could not maneuver against Lee's flank he accepted the

necessity and reality of attrition warfare; and, because of this knowledge of his opponent, he knew that the strategic goals of the Union could be achieved through his relentless hammering on the southern force. Although this next observation can not be substantiated through research literature, I feel that Grant realized that his disproportionately high casualties would save lives in the long term by bringing the war to an earlier end.

CONCLUSIONS

One conclusion must be that Lee's fine operational planning and tactics could not save a defective military strategy, particularly, at this late stage of the war. Lee functioned during this campaign only at the operational and tactical levels, not the strategic level. Although this may have allowed him to concentrate in a more focused manner, and thus have been an advantage, it was also obvious that the Confederacy had long needed a change at the strategic level.

On the other hand, although failing miserably in the East operationally and tactically, Grant did succeed strategically. Grant's operations from the Rapidan to Petersburg and Sherman's Atlanta Campaign, though not ending the war in 1864, brought it within sight. At the operational level Grant succeeded in only one endeavor. He successfully crossed the James River bringing the war to the doorstep of the Confederacy's political and logistical capital. Except for Grant's above successes, there

do not seem to be any other highpoints operationally or tactically in Grant's execution of the Wilderness or Petersburg Campaigns. However, in the final analysis, it is the war's "end state" that is all important to the nation; and, with that in mind, it certainly appears that President Lincoln did, in fact, selected the right man to command his army.

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